

## Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program

### Fact Sheet

The Resources Agency has released a study to restore the Salton Sea ecosystem and permanently protect fish and wildlife that depend upon it for habitat.

The Salton Sea Restoration Study and Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) describe eight alternatives and a "No Action" alternative to restore the Salton Sea as a long-term protection of habitat for wildlife. These alternatives were included in the Draft PEIR following an intensive two-year process that analyzed different scenarios using the latest science, and incorporated input from the public, local officials, federal agencies, business, agriculture, recreational interests and environmental organizations.

During a 90-day public comment period on the Draft PEIR, the state will conduct public workshops and meet with residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties to discuss the report, solicit input, and build consensus on a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative will then be submitted to the state Legislature for consideration and action.

#### Alternatives

##### **Alternative 1 – Saline Habitat Complex I**

Saline habitat primarily in the southern portion of the Salton Sea with shallow water habitat for a variety of birds and some fish species such as tilapia.

##### **Alternative 2 – Saline Habitat Complex II**

Saline habitat in the southern, northern and western portions of the Sea.

##### **Alternative 3 – Concentric Rings**

Two concentric water bodies constructed using rock filled dikes would provide a shoreline around the entire Sea and includes a brackish waterbody and marine waterbody.

##### **Alternative 4 – Concentric Lakes**

This alternative was proposed by the Imperial Group. Multiple lakes forming multiple waterbodies constructed from sediment filled "geotubes" covered by soils from the Sea bed.

##### **Alternative 5 – North Sea**

Deep, marine, open-water habitat in the north, and saline habitat complex in the southern portion of the Sea.

As California's largest lake, the Salton Sea is one of the most important habitats for birds in North America. Located in Riverside and Imperial counties, it was created by a levee break along the Colorado River in 1905 and has been largely sustained by agricultural drain water.

The lack of a natural outlet has contributed to increasing salinity, and the Sea will eventually be unable to support wildlife. The Quantification Settlement Agreement signed by western states in 2003 requires a reduction in California's use of Colorado River water, further impacting the Sea's salinity.

In 2003, the state Legislature directed the California Resources Agency to "undertake the restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem and the permanent protection of the wildlife dependent upon that ecosystem." The plan focuses on several key elements – conservation measures to protect fish and wildlife, minimizing air quality impacts, and protecting water quality.



**Alternative 6 – North Sea Combined**

Deep, marine waterbody in the northern portion of the Salton Sea extending along the western shore. A Shoreline Waterway would be located on the southern end, and would include a smaller Saline Habitat Complex area in the south.

**Alternative 7 – Combined North and South Lakes**

This alternative was submitted by the Salton Sea Authority. A marine waterbody would extend along the western shore of the Sea to the confluence of the Alamo River on the south side with a Saline Habitat Complex area in the south-eastern portion of the Salton Sea, and water treatment components, storage reservoir and upstream wetlands.

**Alternative 8 – South Sea Combined**

Deep, marine waterbody in the southern portion of the Salton Sea extending to Bombay Beach on the east, the entire western shore, and near North Shore on the northern end of the Sea. Would include smaller Saline Habitat Complex areas along the eastern and western portions of the Sea.

**No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative is comprised of two scenarios, including variable conditions to provide the basis to evaluate impacts of the other proposed configurations. Both scenarios include mitigation for desert pupfish and air quality impacts, and the facilities needed to implement these actions.

More information on the **Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration** is available at: [www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov](http://www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov)